



HERO Summer Think Tank: Monday, June 6 and Tuesday, June 7, 2022; A Virtual Conference

Individual and Organizational Assets that Boost Belongingness: What Place for the Workplace in Supporting Social Connectedness, Spirituality/Faith, and Purpose?

Monday, June 6, 2022

- 10:00 AM CT WELCOME
Karen Moseley, HERO President and CEO
- 10:15 AM CT **Spirituality, Faith and Connectedness.** [Jessica Grossmeier](#), PhD, MPH, CEO, Jessica Grossmeier Consulting. Reactor: [Gary Gunderson](#), DDiv, DMin.
- 10:45 AM CT **Inclusion and Interfaith Dialogue.** [Gary Gunderson](#), DDiv, DMin, Professor, Faith and Health of the Public, Wake Forest University, School of Divinity; Vice President, FaithHealth, Wake Forest Baptist Medical Center. Reactor: [Jessica Grossmeier](#), PhD, MPH.
- 11:15 AM CT Table Topic Discussions
- 11:45AM CT BREAK
- 12:30 PM CT **Workplaces with Higher Callings and the “Spiritual but not Religious” (SBNR) Movement.** [Linda Mercadante](#), PhD, Founder, Healthy Beliefs – Healthy Spirit.
- 1:00 PM CT Table Topic Discussions
- 1:30 PM CT **How Belief Systems Affect Mental Health and Well-being.** [Vic Strecher](#), PhD, MPH, CEO, Kumanu; Professor of Health Behavior & Health Education, Director for Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship, University of Michigan.
- 2:00 PM CT Facilitated purpose finding exercise with Vic Strecher.
- 2:30 PM CT **Mindfulness Practices that Support Social Connectedness and Well-Being.** [Mariann Johnson](#), Instructor, Earl E. Bakken Center for Spirituality and Healing, University of Minnesota.
- 3:00 PM CT Guided meditation and reflections with Mariann Johnson.
- 3:30 PM CT ADJOURN
Karen Moseley, HERO President and CEO

Tuesday, June 7, 2022

- 10:00 AM CT WELCOME
Karen Moseley, HERO President and CEO
- 10:15 AM CT **The Religious Equity and Inclusion Index (REDI): About the Most Faith Friendly Workplaces in America.** [Christina Clark](#), PhD, Senior Education Engagement Specialist, The Religious Freedom and Business Foundation.
- 11:15 AM CT Table Topic Discussions
- 11:30 AM CT **Leadership and Inclusive Expression in Public, Private, and Faith Sectors. What Role for the Workplace?** [Joel Spoonheim](#), MURP, Senior Director for Worksite Health & Population Well-being, HealthPartners; [Ron Stout](#), MD, MPH, President and CEO, Ardmore Institute of Health.
- 12:00 PM CT BREAK
- 1:00 PM CT **Faith Friendly Organizational Practices.** [Malcolm Marler](#), MDiv, DMin, Leadership Support Specialist, UAB Medicine; [Bethany Slater](#), MSt, Jewish Educator and Doctoral Candidate, Comparative Theology, Boston College.
- 1:30 PM CT **How Could Faith Traditions fit in Organizational Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policies and Practices?** [Tsitsi Masvawure](#), PhD, Professor of Practice in Health Studies, Coordinator for the Center for Interdisciplinary Studies, College of the Holy Cross; [Jack Bastable](#), Co-President, Vital Leadership.
- 2:00 PM CT Table Topic Discussions
- 2:30 PM CT **HERO Research Update.** Mental Health Measures that Matter.
- 3:00 PM CT **Fall Think Tank Preview.** Interactive Discussion with **Emily Wolfe, MSW, LCSW** and **David Ballard, PsyD, MBA**: Will new and emerging guidance improve employer efforts to advance workforce mental health?
- 3:30 PM CT ADJOURN
Karen Moseley, HERO President and CEO

Individual and Organizational Assets that Boost Belongingness: What Place for the Workplace in Supporting Social Connectedness, Spirituality/Faith, and Purpose?

Encouraging our colleagues to “bring their whole selves” to work has been a welcome, albeit sometimes precarious, byproduct of the surge of interest in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs at workplaces. George Floyd and other high visibility race crimes have fostered a greater commitment to DEI and led to many companies endorsing Black Lives Matter. Other forms of discrimination related to religion, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation are also germane to DEI initiatives, but advocacy by groups such as Muslim Legal Fund of America (MLFA), Asian Americans Advancing Justice (AAJC), Anti-

Defamation League (ADL), or GLBTQ Legal Advocates and Defenders (GLAD) have not been as prominent in discourse about the role employers can play in advancing safety, health equity, and social justice.

This HERO Think Tank explores what role employers, organizational leaders, and grassroots organizers, such as worksite wellness champions, can play in broadening dialogue, affecting policies, and more deeply integrating principles of inclusion and acceptance in workplace health and well-being initiatives. In particular, we will examine the role of belongingness and how companies are facilitating social connectedness. We will facilitate discussions about the current state of workplace based mental well-being and ask how meaning and purpose and even whether interfaith dialogue at work could have a place in fostering resilience, psychological safety, and improved well-being at work.

HERO has embraced the definition of well-being from Healthy People 2030, which was adapted from the New Economics Foundation and the Lambeth Happiness Program: *“Well-being can be understood as how people think, feel and function, both on a personal and social level, and how they evaluate their lives as a whole.”* Importantly, note that it is a definition that describes a state of well-being with life satisfaction elements that can be measured, but it does not explain how a person gets there. Since the advent of the workplace health and well-being movement, definitions about what constitutes personal wellness and what factors predict resilience and longevity have almost invariably included a spiritual dimension. For example, run an internet search on the [“Wellness Wheel.”](#) The wheel’s spokes represent a timeworn but instructive heuristic intended to convey the multi-dimensionality of good health. You will undoubtedly find, in multi-colored splendor, that social well-being holds equal footing alongside physical, emotional, financial, and environmental in any self-respecting conceptual model for advancing health. As the metaphor goes, when any of the spokes are shorter or missing, the wheel of a healthy life doesn’t roll along as well.

Indeed, there is ample scientific support for the connection between belongingness, spirituality, faith, and health. The additional longevity conferred by the morality-based lifestyle choices of Mormons and Seventh Day Adventists has been well documented. Similarly, the “Blue Zones” study shows centenarians are more likely to belong to a faith-based community and to regularly attend faith-based services. Researchers have also shown the power of prayer in preventing and resolving mental health problems as well as playing a role in physical healing.

Bromides that invariably arise about connectedness and spirituality are “I’m spiritual but not religious” or “There is a big difference between spirituality and faith.” This Think Tank is interested in the contributions of either and both. Simply put, we define spirituality as what individuals do to find peace and purpose. Meditation, time in nature, communing with art, or mindfulness practices can all foster a sense of spirit. We define religion as what groups of people believe about a higher power. Worship, prayer, religious music, and faith traditions for life’s milestones like birth, marriage, and death all play a role in well-being. For many, spirituality and religion are profoundly overlapping. For others they are decidedly separate or unimportant, distracting or even bothersome. You can anticipate that in this Think Tank we will be both lumpers and splitters. That is, we will explore each of these differences in the context of barriers to, and boundaries for, integrating faith and spirituality into workplace well-being strategies. For some organizations, such as governmental agencies, boundaries between church and state are explicit. Other organizations are considered “faith-friendly” because of the spiritual beliefs of their founders or because they intentionally seek to appeal to faith-driven consumers.

To be sure, concepts relating to the role of exploring life’s meaning and purpose in mental well-being have already been trending affirmatively in worksite well-being initiatives. The advantages of ascribing meaningful work to a meaningful life and providing venues and tools for exploring purpose and passions are well accepted. But what are the limits and/or untapped potentialities of taking such ideas to the next level, to getting even more personal, to really bringing our whole selves to work, beliefs and all? Of concern is whether a deeper expression of one’s beliefs at work can, paradoxically, foster exclusion

rather than inclusion given religious tenets about sexuality, gender roles, and false gods. We are planning this Think Tank with full appreciation for those parents who told us to avoid talking about politics or religion at a dinner party. At the same time, we have never experienced a HERO Think Tank where members have not been respectful and open-minded while learning about different approaches and opinions. It is in that spirit, one of curiosity and inclusivity, that we will examine “what place for the workplace” when it comes to examining how a feeling of belongingness affects mental well-being and what role the employer can play relative to spirituality, faith, life’s purpose, and well-being.

Learning Objectives

After participating in this Think Tank, members will be able to:

- Discuss the role of leaders and managers in defining, respecting, and encouraging colleagues to bring their whole selves to work.
- Explain employee well-being benefits and threats attendant to fostering belongingness and discussing meaning and purpose, as well as spirituality and faith, at the workplace.
- Identify what could be included in an organizational code of respect for diverse beliefs.
- Explain differences between meditation, prayer, mindfulness practices, nature therapy, and worship as they affect individual and collective well-being.
- Describe the negative and positive effects that honoring faith traditions at work can have on religious employees and on non-believers.
- Discuss individual differences in faith traditions and whether, how, and if to provide venues for interfaith dialogue at work and impacts of such on employee well-being.
- List examples of organizational strategies aimed at responding to employee needs and preferences related to belongingness and mental well-being.

Recommended Readings and Think Tank Sources:

[Measuring WellBeing in Lambeth](#) (PDF) Report

[Measuring WellBeing NEF](#) Definition and Report

Definition of Well-being: **Promoting Health and Well-being in Healthy People 2030**

Pronk, Nico PhD, MA, FASCM, FAWHP; Kleinman, Dushanka V. DDS, MScD; Goekler, Susan F. PhD, MCHES; Ochiai, Emmeline MPH; Blakey, Carter BS; Brewer, Karen H. MPH

Journal of Public Health Management and Practice: November/December 2021 - Volume 27 - Issue - p S242-S248; doi: 10.1097/PHH.0000000000001254

[NEF Wellbeing and Equity](#) Report

[On Faith and Health at the Workplace](#). Paul Terry, AJHP

Wellness to Well-being Definitions. [On Being Optimizers](#). Paul Terry, AJHP

Blue Zones, [Religion Stress and Longevity](#).

Spirituality and Organizational Commitment. Executive and Leadership Support Study ([Open access](#))

A New Approach to [Faith at Work](#). Workforce.com

[Spiritual Based Leadership Database](#). University of Arkansas, Walton College of Business

[Spirit at Work Association](#)

[Healthybeliefs.org](#) – website of Dr. Linda Mercadante.